A SERMON Preach'd at Steyning, &c.

Colossians III. ii.

Set your Affection on things above, not on things on the Earth.

THE main Business and Design of the *Christian Religion*, is to Sublimate, Refine, and Spiritualize our Nature: To Raise us from the Gross Conceptions of *Sense*, to the more Exalted Speculations of *Eternity*. In short, To render us capable of GOD's Favour and Protection here, and of Admittance to Everlasting Glory hereafter.

The *Light of Nature*, or *Reaſon*, indeed was a ſufficient Guide to us in Matters relating to our *Temporal Happineſs*: By the faint Glimmerings of that Lamp within us, we cou'd likewiſe diſcover, and make a ſhift to trace out ſome General Lines and Strokes of our *Duty*; as, That God was to be Worſhip'd, That Parents were to be Honour'd, and the like. And not only ſo, but we cou'd in ſome meaſure, *diſtinguiſh* thoſe Things and Means that promoted our Duty, from the chief Letts and Obſtacles to our *Progreſs* therein. We cou'd diſcern the *Inſufficiency of all Earthly Enjoyments*, to procure a true and laſting Satisfaction to the Mind. But all this while, the Byaſs of our Inclination was ſo ſtrong, and carried us ſo vehemently towards the Entertainments of *Senſe*, that let *Reaſon* diſtate never ſo Magiſterially, Luxurious Fancy wou'd ſtill plead for Indulgence. And this is the Reaſon, why the old Philoſophers and Moraliſts among the *Heathens*, were ſo backward to Act up to the Height of their Principles, that they were generally obſerv'd to wallow in thoſe Brutiſh Delights; which, at the ſame time, they condemn'd in others, and ſeverely reprimanded in their Diſcourſes and Lectures; and for which themſelves were ſharply Chaſtiz'd by the Laſh of their own Conſciences.

The *Jews*, 'tis true, had a clearer and more certain Proſpect of their Duty, than the Benighted *Gentiles* cou'd pretend to: They had the Will of God revealed to them in the moſt legible and apparent Characters, engraven by the Hand of God himſelf, and moſt exactly and carefully handed down to Poſterity. Nevertheleſs, in as much as their Law ſeems only to

limit and restrain External Actions, without the least regard to the inward Motions and Conceptions of the Mind; and withal, to be establish'd, primarily and expressly, upon no greater Motives, than Temporal Rewards and Punishments; it can hardly be suppos'd, that they cou'd be wrought up to such a pitch of Self-denial and Mortification, as to transfer their *Affection* from Sensual Objects, and to place it only and entirely *upon things above.*

But the *Christian Oeconomy* is of an exacter Frame: Its Precepts extend not only to particular Actions, but to the very Thoughts and Intents of the Heart: So as the most Secret Motions of the Soul come within its Jurisdiction, and are brought to the *Bar of Reason*, to be try'd and examin'd, before they take vent in Words or Actions. *Christianity* not only teaches us to Regulate our Morals, but also to Bridle our Affections, and give Check to each unruly Appetite, that would otherwise lash out into some wild Extravagance.

There are many Precepts of this Kind, and to this Purpose, in the *New Testament*; one of which I have made choice of, and come now to Discourse upon.

The Words, in short, contain these Two Things:

First, A Positive and Express Command, *Set your Affection on things above.*

Secondly, A Negative Precept, *Set not your Affection on things on the Earth.*

The main Point of the Buſineſs lies in the firſt part of the Verſe, *Set your Affection*, &c. That's the Duty enjoyn'd. The ſecond Part, which contains the Prohibition, is added as the Means whereby we may compaſs that Duty, *viz.* By removing the great Hindrance and Stop in the Way thereto. So that if I can perſwade you to alienate your Affection from *Earthly Things*, there needs no more to be done: My Deſign is then fully accompliſh'd, and St. *Paul's* Advice purſu'd and taken. For he that has once brought himſelf to ſuch a paſs, that he can *lightly eſteem* and *ſet at nought* the Things of this World, will moſt aſſuredly *love* and *embrace* thoſe that relate to the next. So ſure is the Tranſition from one *Extreme* to another; when there is no *Medium*, no middle Courſe or Path to tread in. Wherefore, that ye may be ſure to *ſet your Affection on Things above*, miſplace it *not on Things on the Earth*.

Now, that I may inculcate this Advice, or rather Precept of the Apoſtle, and preſs it home upon your Conſideration of, and Compliance with it; it will be requiſite to obſerve the following Method.

I. I ſhall ſhew, how great an Influence *Earthly Things* have upon the Mind; for which Reaſon St. *Paul* cautions us here, not to ſet our Affection upon them.

II. What unfit Objects they are, in themſelves, to yield us any true Satisfaction, though we ſhou'd enjoy them.

III. And laſtly, I ſhall make a ſhort Application; and ſo conclude.

II. Then I'm to ſhew, How great an influence Earthly Things have upon the Mind.

The Mind of Man is of ſuch an Amorous Nature, ſo apt to cleave and ſtick to thoſe Objects, that preſent themſelves under any Specious Appearance, that we may as well ſuppoſe the *Needle* to forſake its beloved *North*, as the Soul to be without its Darling Favourites. Now, of all thoſe Objects that make ſuit to it, and court its Affection, the things of this World are, too truly and ſadly, found to be moſt ſucceſsful in their Addreſs, and to gain the greateſt Sway over it. (Not that they are more amiable, or can ſo much as pretend to ſtand in Competition with thoſe ineſtimable Joys of another World: But the Faculties of the Soul being weaken'd and indiſpos'd by the Fall of *Adam*, and the Eye of Reaſon dim'd and blear'd, by the Scurf and Corruption of Sin, ſo that it cannot take a through and exact view of things; 'tis apt to take up with, and be impos'd upon by Forms and Out-ſides, and ſo to make wrong Eſtimations of their Worth and Value.

Thus it comes to paſs, that Riches are by ſome thought worthy to be pitch'd upon as the ſole Object of their *Affection*; and, I doubt, I might add, of their *Adoration* too. Two main Principles of which ſort of *Votaries* we find to be,

Firſt, That every Hour is to be eſteem'd as loſt, that is not ſpent either in the Acquiſition or Augmentation of an Eſtate. And (as a Confectary of this) if it cannot be Acquir'd or Augmented by Lawful Means, Unlawful muſt preſently take place; *Facias quocunque Modo Rem*. So that neither Bribery, nor Subornation of Witneſſes, neither Extorſion nor Perjury, muſt be

Boggled,

Boggled at, if they may promote these strong (and, as they think, pious) designs of *setting up* this *Golden Calf* in the *Bethel* of their Hearts.

Another sort there is, that, with the *Pharisee*, doing all things to be seen of Men, make *Honour* and popular Applause the chief End of all their Designs, and the Mark at which they level their Aim. These (tho' they seem to have chosen a more Noble Object, yet) are no less Idolatrous than the other. For to this Idol (*Honour*) they are ready to sacrifice not only their Fortunes, but also their Lives: Rather than it shall, by any (tho' perhaps but an Imaginary) Affront, be violated or injur'd, both the Laws of God and Man, yea, the very Union betwixt Soul and Body, shall be broken and dissolved.

And (if we may make a Transition from these *Sublime* Sinners, and stoop to those who are sunk so far below their Species, that they are not unlike *the Beasts that perish*) there are others, who place their Felicity in the base and mean Pleasures and Satisfactions of the Body. Their (almost) constant Employment being to *make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof*; they are (not unfitly) said, by the Apostle, to *make their Belly their God*. For to it so many excessive Sacrifices, so many unreasonable *Meat and Drink-Offerings* are daily presented, as if they meant to make the Apostle's Words good in the Literal Sense; yea, as if they wou'd make a *Dagon* of it, (which they say, was a Deity half Flesh, and half Fish) both Sea and Land must be extravagantly Ransack'd for one Meal. And that Artist, who can best order these to the

the Exalting of Luſt, muſt be, as it were, the Prieſt to this really Brutiſh Sacrifice.

It is eaſie to be imagin'd, with how much Scorn and Contempt ſuch Perſons will look upon him, that ſhall tell them they have taken falſe meaſures of things, that they do not only *run Counter* to God's Expreſs Commands, and the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, but that they act awry, even from the Rules and Dictates of ſober *Reaſon*; which wo'd tell them, that he who places his Happineſs, or ſets his Affection upon theſe Earthly Enjoyments, is much like him, who *leans upon a broken Reed*, which will be likely (in the Prophet's Phraſe) *to run into his Hand*; and ſo, to the defeating of his Hopes, will add preſent Smart and Puniſhment. He, I ſay, that ſhall ſuggeſt ſuch wholſome Truths as theſe, muſt expect to be accounted (what St. *Paul* was by the *Epicureans* of old) *a Babbler, and a ſetter forth of unpracticable Doctrines*, thought a credulous Fool, for Believing ſuch things, and more ſottiſhly ridiculous for putting them in Practice, and parting with preſent Delights, only in hopes of ſome future Rewards.

However, being back'd by the uncontroulable Word of God, the Suffrage of all the wiſe and ſerious Part of Mankind, and not doubting of a Party in the very Breaſts of thoſe, who are the boldeſt Aſſailers of theſe Truths, (I mean Conſcience;) I ſhall proceed to my *Second General Head:* Under which I am to ſhew, The Inſufficiency and Unfitneſs of theſe Earthly Things to yield us any true Satisfaction, tho' we ſhou'd enjoy them.

II. If we take an exact Inventory of all the particular Enjoyments this World affords, those various Objects to which the Carnal Affections of Men do point, we shall find them all to come under those Three Heads, whereunto St. *John* (1 John 2. 16.) has reduced them, summing them up as it were in gross: *The Lust of the Flesh*, or Sensual Pleasures; *The Lust of the Eyes*, or Riches; and *the Pride of Life*, i. e. Worldly Honour and Greatness.

Upon each of these I shall treat apart, and shew, what unfit Objects they are to place our Affection upon.

And first for Bodily and Inordinate Pleasures. These are of three sorts: *Gluttony*, *Drunkenness*, and *Uncleanness*; which being of such Affinity to each other, both in their Beastly Nature, and Unhappy Consequences, it will not be amiss to consider them together.

Now these Pleasures (if I may so call them) are so far from yielding any true Satisfaction: That

I. First of all we shall find them to be Contumelious and Irrational.

'Tis the Prerogative of our *Reason*, that it differences and distinguishes us from Beasts, and ranks us in a higher Class of Beings: By Virtue of this Principle within us, we are denominated *Men*. And therefore it cannot be suppos'd, that *Reason* shou'd in the least Countenance such Proceedings, as in a short time

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wou'd *Unman* us, and dethrone her. For he that lets go the Reins to his furious and unruly Appetites, and lets them run riot in the ways of Debauchery, muſt *lower* his Pretences, and be content to herd with his Four-footed Brethren. That is, upon Condition that they will admit him into their Society: For truly, if they ſhou'd once ſtand up for the Honour of their Fraternity, 'tis odds but ſome of our Debauchees wou'd be forc'd to ſink a degree lower than them: Since (as one obſerves) only ſome few of them, *the very Beaſts of the Beaſts*, are guilty of any ſuch Exceſſes. Generally ſpeaking, their Appetites do not tranſgreſs the Regular Ends of Nature: They eat to ſatisfie Hunger, drink to ſatisfie Thirſt, and couple at ſuch Seaſons as beſt tend to preſerve their Kind. But Man having a larger Scope and Sphere of Action, takes a larger Swing in the Satisfaction of his Senſual Part, makes uſe of the Faculties of his Immortal Soul only as Pimps and Panders to his Luſt, forces his Reaſon to truckle to his inferior Faculties, and attend the Motion of each capricious Appetite.

And how baſe and degenerous a Management this is, I leave to your Conſideration; and only deſire thoſe, who thus make *Beaſts* of themſelves, to *Chew the Cud* a little upon the *Dignity* of their Order. But

II. Theſe Inordinate Pleaſures are not only Brutiſh and Irrational, and therefore highly Contumelious to Humane Nature, but they are likewiſe *Naufeous and Cloying*.

The Charms of *Intemperance* are so feeble, and so unlikely of themselves to engage the Affections, that 'tis no small Wonder *she* should have so many Admirers.

In what part soever we take a view of her, we shall find her but ill furnish'd out to tempt the most doting Fool in the Universe. It must needs be a Wonderful Satisfaction to *cards the Bottle*, when the full-charg'd Stomach is ready to disgorge, and Nature struggling to relieve her self, to guzzle down our own Destruction, and bring a Deluge upon our Frame; to use our Bodies as Spouts and Tunnels, only to transmit Liquors; to sicken under the nauseous Qualms of a Debauch, and surfeit upon the repeated Loads of Drink.

But you'll say perhaps, That 'tis only the young, raw, squeamish Sinners, that are subject to these Disorders, the puny Companions, that cannot bear their Load, but sink under the Pressure of a Liberal Dose, that have not conquer'd and stifled their little childish Antipathies, nor brought their Stomachs to a good digestive Frame. Whereas it fares otherwise with the hardned thoro'-pac'd Blades: They can Quaff, and Carouse it as long as they please, without any fear of discomposure. The last Glass with them slides down as smoothly as the first, and sparkles with an equal Lustre: And Repetition is so far from cloying, that it whets *their* Appetite, and adds a greater *Gusto* to their Palates.

To which we may return in Answer:

1. That this excessive Drinking is contrary to Nature, upon their own Confession: In that none can attain to an ability under it, without offering Violence to his Appetite, and forcing it to a loath'd Compliance.

2. That after all their Boasts, the stoutest of them are sufficiently punish'd in these Debaucheries. Their Delights are as the Wine of a Condemn'd Man; as the Feast of him who sat under a naked Sword, hanging over his Head by a slender Hair. In short, Their Joy at the best is but a Mungril-kind of Delight, an awkward sort of Satisfaction, that sits uneasie upon them, notwithstanding their Pretences.

What has been said of *Drunkenness*, may for the most part be applied to *Gluttony* and *Uncleanness*. But the first of these being generally subservient to the latter, will scarce deserve a distinct Consideration.

And as for *Uncleanness*: That being a Vice too foul to be nam'd, and therefore too scandalous to be treated of, I shall not rake into the Rubbish of it, but only take a distant Glance at it, and in so doing make this one Remark, *viz.* That *Lust* has her *Martyrs*, as well as *Religion*; that whereas there are but few to be found, who will observe the Apostle's Rule, of *Mortifying their Members*, in a Spiritual Sense: There are many that do it in a Literal, and by their infamous

Debauchery prevent the Malignant Faculty of the Grave; I mean, *Rot alive.* In Excuſe of which, more than *Bedlam-Phrenzy*, what can be ſaid? Unleſs it be this, That ſuch Men (if I may ſo call them) act upon a Principle of Policy; and deſign, by *inflaming* their Blood with a continual Courſe of Luſt, to prepare themſelves the better for thoſe *Flames that ſhall never be quenched.*

But this is too *hot* a Subject to dwell upon: I haſte therefore to conſider in the next place,

II. *The Vanity and Inſufficiency of Riches.* Which I ſhall do by taking a view of them,

1. In their Acquiſition.
2. In their Poſſeſſion.

Firſt then, let us conſider the Pains and Anxieties that attend us in the Acquiſition or Purſuit of Wealth.

But this is a Subject too large to be treated of throughly, in a Diſcourſe of this Nature. Beſides, 'tis ſo notorious, that a particular Proſecution of it wou'd be tedious and inſignificant. For who, that has made any Remarks upon the preſent, or conſulted Hiſtory for an account of paſt Ages, can be ignorant of the Cares, Troubles, Fears, and Diſappointments, that accompany Mortals in the Search and Proſecution of Wealth?

'Tis the Lot indeed of a great many, to chop upon a fair Portion, without any of this Pain and Trouble

in acquiring it. Many ſucceed to a great Eſtate, and wealthy Coffers, without being at all concern'd in the raiſing of their Fortunes, or ſo much as once thinking of the Toil and Sweat of their Anceſtors. And again, If they themſelves were condemn'd to the ſame Drudgery with others, and engag'd in the ſame Hardſhips, to increaſe their Subſtance; yet, if Riches were of ſufficient Value to reward their laborious and anxious Purſuit, and to yield them a plentiful Crop of Happineſs, where wou'd be the Blame of their Diligence and Induſtry? Who cou'd accuſe them of Folly and Stupidity for ſo Rational a Proceeding?

'Tis time therefore, in the next place, to take a View of Riches in Poſſeſſion, and to Examine a little into their Intrinſick Worth and Value.

The Goodneſs or Worth of Things muſt ſpring from one of theſe two Grounds; either from Opinion impos'd upon them by Men, or from ſome real Qualities inherent in their Nature. Now *Riches* have their Eſteem, which they carry amongſt Men, not from their own Qualities, but from External Impoſition, and the Inſtitution of Man. They have no Natural Propriety to the Eye, can make no Impreſſions of Pleaſure there. They muſt therefore be Valuable, not upon their own account, but for what they can procure us.

And here, it muſt be confeſs'd, that they can (as the World goes) do us abundance of Service and Credit, and were doubtleſs (when they were given

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by GOD) intended ſome way for Helps and Aſſiſtances; and ought therefore to be ſo far regarded, as they are inſtrumental to our Welfare: But we quite pervert the Deſign of them, when we doat, or *ſet our Affection* upon them; and not only ſo, but we Magnifie them beyond their proper Value, and miſcalculate extremely in our Judgments.

For I would fain know (firſt, as to our Temporal Concerns) what Benefit that Man has of his Wealth, that is ſuffering under ſome acute and incurable Diſeaſe: It may purchaſe him *the Unicorn's Horn*, and *the Balm of Gilead*; I mean, the moſt exquiſite and coſtly Medicaments; and yet all theſe are, at the beſt, like to have no other Effect, but this, *viz.* To prolong his Pain: And then the Conſideration, that he muſt leave all his Wealth, and the Laſhes of Conſcience for his extreme Folly and Impiety in forſaking GOD, *the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewing out to himſelf broken Ciſterns, that will hold no Water*, (as the Prophet ſpeaks) and in building his Felicity upon a falſe Bottom, upon a Sandy, or rather *Dirty* Foundation.

Theſe things, if they come home and cloſe to his Thoughts, muſt, without doubt, be as great, if not a greater Torture to him, than his Diſeaſe; and he himſelf muſt be forc'd to ſay of his Riches (what *Job* ſaid of his Friends) *Miſerable Comforters are ye*; which rather increaſe than aſſwage my Grief, and deſerve to be the Objects, not of my Love and Affection, but of my Scorn and Hatred.

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And can it then be expected, that they shou'd Cure the Maladies of the *Soul*, which are not in the least able to mitigate those of the *Body*? If the Gold of both the *Indies* cannot remove an habitual Headach, how shou'd a small Pittance of it allay the exquisite Pain of a Wounded Conscience; which *Solomon* describes to us, as exceeding the *Strength* of Mortals to *bear*?

But because such Distempers of the Soul are not very common; Men having, by vicious Customs, sear'd their Consciences, and so made them insensible of such Wounds; let us suppose only some Discontent to possess a Man's Mind (whether it proceed from Melancholy, or immoderate Care for the World) Riches will be so far from removing such a Distemper, that they will, in all probability, rather add Fuel to it: CONTENTMENT having been ever observ'd to be a greater Stranger to Palaces, than to poor Cottages and Cells.

WEALTH therefore being prov'd to be a very unfit Object of our Affection, what Pretence is there, in the last place, for

III. HONOUR to put in here? If that which is more durable than it, and frequently the *Parent* of it, fails: Welh may that, which depends chiefly upon the airy, empty Applause of the People, (who are as unstable and fickle as the Wind) frustrate the Hopes and Expectations of them that set their Hearts upon

upon it: Who ſometimes find (by miſerable Experience) that this, as well as Riches, can, in *Solomon*'s Phraſe, *take to it ſelf Wings, and fly away*; leaving the depoſed *Gallant* ſtaring about him, and wondring what is become of thoſe Loads of HONOUR, which he ſo lately carried upon his Shoulders.

Or if this does not happen, yet the Grave will lay him even, and upon a level, with his Neighbours: Death will not be afraid of his Bluſtring and Huffing; nor ſpare his *Bravery*, more than anothers *Rags*.

So that when he is juſt going out of the World, and has the greateſt need of Comfort and Satisfaction, even then his Honours, upon which he depended, are juſt a departing from him, and leave him moſt wofully in the Lurch: Who (now it is too late) begins to Reflect upon his *Pompous and Reſplendent Folly*; and to Conſider, how much better it had been for him to have *ſet his Affection upon Things above*, rather than on ſuch Gawdy Trifles.

We ſee therefore, that however Title and Figure, Pomp and Splendor, an Honourable Retinue, Troops of Attendants, and the like, may raiſe a great Buſtle in the World, and draw the Eyes of moſt Men after them; yet, upon ſtrict Examination, they ſink below their promis'd Value.

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'Tis true, They bring Authority, Distance, and Reverence with them from other Men; yet, notwithstanding they do not, by any proper Vertue of their own, put any Solid and Substantial Merit into the Man himself.

In short, They are no better than the meer *Trappings* of Worth; vain *Theatrical Appearances*, which, by the Advantage of *false Lights*, and *treacherous Prospects*, dazzle our Eyes, and strike upon our Fancies.

It remains now, in the Third and Last Place, that I make a brief Application, and so conclude.

III. We have seen, first, what Conquests the Things of this World (which is one of that *Grand Triumvirate*, one of that *Threefold Combination of Spiritual Enemies*) daily make upon our Affections, and what a mighty Sway they maintain over us.

It concerns us therefore highly, to stand upon our guard, and not suffer them to make such Inroads upon our Consciences.

§. And that we be enabled the better to withstand them, let us enquire a little into their *Military Conduct*: How they form their *Designs*, make their *Approaches*, raise their *Batteries*, and manage their

their *Attacks*. For, as in Temporal, ſo in Spiritual Warfare, 'tis a Matter of no ſmall Advantage, to watch each particular Step and Motion of an Enemy, and detect the *Scheme* of his Proceedings.

Firſt then, we may obſerve, that the great Succeſs, which theſe Earthly Things meet with in their Attempts, is owing not ſo much to the Nature of the Things themſelves, but that they are put into the Hands of that cunning Gameſter of a Warrior, the *Devil*; who plays *Prizes* upon them, and manages them with ſuch Art and Dexterity, that, whilſt we are gazing and ſtaring upon his *Juggling Slight*, (without the leaſt Apprehenſion, that he's any way concern'd, or has a Hand in the Movement) we are frequently ſnap'd and trapan'd, and bubbled out of our Precious and Immortal Souls.

This Crafty Adverſary we have to deal with, is continually hatching ſome Miſchievous Plot againſt us: He turns and winds himſelf into a Thouſand Shapes and Diſguiſes, to practiſe upon our Weakneſs and Credulity.

But ſtill, the ſureſt *Card* he has to *play*, and the Bait which is ſwallowed with moſt Greedineſs by unwary Mortals, is the Propoſal of Worldly Satisfactions and Enjoyments.

And of this he is ſo ſenſible, and was ever ſo confident of Succeſs from it, that he expected it wou'd

wou'd gain upon our Saviour himſelf, *Matth.* 4. 9. From which place we may obſerve, that the Devil reſerved this Temptation to the laſt, as thinking it by much the ſtrongeſt; and that immediately upon the failure and ill ſucceſs of it, he went his way; confeſſing, as it were, that he had now made uſe of his greateſt Artifice, and the very *Maſter-piece* of the Invention of a Devil.

But this is not all; there is another deplorable Reaſon yet behind, why we are ſo ready to yield up our Affection to theſe Earthly Things; and that is, the *Pravity* and wicked Bent *of our own Nature.* We harbour and entertain our moſt dangerous Enemy in our Boſom.

We may bid ſome Defiance to all Enemies *from without*, and perhaps ſtand it out againſt them: But when Force without is ſeconded by Fraud and Treachery *within*, how can it be otherwiſe, but we muſt *Surrender upon Diſcretion?*

Indeed, if when we are *Beſet* with Temptations, we did but make any Vigorous *Defence*, and endeavour to Repel our Adverſaries, by manfully *Sallying out upon them*, or ſo much as beg GOD's Succouring and Aſſiſting Hand, to *Raiſe the Siege*, and Reſcue us from them, it were no hard matter to maintain our Ground.

But (alas!) we are so far from any such Manly Resolutions, that we generally cry *Quarter* upon the first Assault, and dare not stand the Brunt of one single Engagement.

Nay, we are such Sottish Cowards, that we will not so much as stay for the first Approach or Appearance of an Enemy; but while he is yet a great way off, we are for sending to desire *Conditions of Peace.*

But further; We do not only thus basely Expose our selves to *Temptations*, but we hunt out for, and pursue them; not to Conquer them, but be Conquer'd by them. We are fond of their Dominion, and voluntarily deliver up our selves to Vassalage and Captivity.

What a strange preposterous way of Management is this, thus to Urge and Tempt our very Tempters, and *Non-plus* the Devil himself at his own Weapons!

Secondly, Let us quicken and stir up our Courage and Resolution against these Undermining and Insinuating Adversaries, by calling to mind their Tyrannical Dominion, and how *unfit* they are to *Lord it* over us.

We are apt to promise our selves a great deal of Satisfaction from their Peaceable Government, as

we fondly repreſent it: But (alas!) upon Tryal we find them to be more than *Egyptian Taſk-maſters.*

When once they have got Footing, and uſurp'd upon our Liberties, we find them Inſatiable in their Demands, and Unreaſonable in their Exactions.

'Tis not a Moderate Supply will ſerve their turn, but ſtill (with *Solomon*'s *Horſe-Leeches*, Prov. 30. 15.) they cry, *Give, give.*

The *Sons of Intemperance* are ſeldom found to give out upon the firſt Courſe. The *Covetous Muckworm* has ſtill ſome Corner of a Bag to fill. And the *Aſpiring Minion* always thinks himſelf a *ſtep* too low.

And indeed how ſhou'd it be otherwiſe; there being ſuch a vaſt Diſproportion betwixt theſe Earthly Enjoyments, and the Soul of Man, that 'tis impoſſible they ſhou'd ever fill up the Capacity of it, or furniſh out an adequate and ſuitable Happineſs for a *Subſtance* of ſuch unbounded Deſires.

Wherefore, ſince *Happineſs* is not of Worldly Growth, let us bid *Adieu* to thoſe Objects that delude us with vain Shadows and Reſemblances of it.

Not that we ought to turn Hermites, and diſengage our ſelves from all Concerns, but thoſe of another World.

All

All that is here enjoyn'd in the Text, all that I am Exhorting you to, is only this; That you *ſit as looſe* to the World as poſſibly you can; that you do not give up your Affections to it; that the Reſpect you pay to *Mammon* do not juſtle or interfere with your Duty to God, or leſſen your Eſteem of Heavenly Delights. *The World is for the Back and the Belly,* (ſays a Worthy Author) *but* GOD *alone is for the Heart.*

For Him therefore let us Preſerve it, and to Him let us Preſent it; from whom we may be aſſur'd to Reap *Felicity:* And that *ſuch as Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into* this Heart it ſelf *to conceive:*

To which God of his Infinite Mercy, *&c.*

FINIS.

23

A SERMON

PREACHED AT

694.g.18.
230

St. *Mary Aldermanbury*,

On *Sunday* the 15th. of *June* 1701.

Before the Honourable Company of Merchants Trading into the *Levant*-Seas.

BY K

The Honourable *HENRY BRIDGES*, M.A. Rector of *Broadwell* in *Glouceſterſhire*, late Student of *Chriſt-Church*, and Chaplain to the Factory at *ALEPPO*.

Publiſh'd by their Order.

LONDON,

Printed for *T. Bennet*, at the *Half-Moon* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1701.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

St. Mary Abchurch,

Before the Honourable Company of Merchant-
Trading to the East Indies.

BY

BRITISH MUSEUM

St. MAT. XIII. 45, 46. v.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchantman, ſeeking goodly Pearls:
Who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and ſold all that he had, and bought it.

THE great Variety of Similitudes by which our Bleſſed Saviour deſcribes the Mighty Power, and chief Properties of the Kingdom of Heaven, in ſome other Paſſages of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, particularly in this Chapter, is ſuch as immediately approves it ſelf to be moſt wiſely accommodated to the various Humours and Capacities of his Hearers, whom they were deſign'd to inſtruct. In the 4th of St. *Mark* at the 33d Verſe, our Saviour is ſaid to have ſpoken the word to them in many Parables as they were able to hear it. In order to this end they muſt needs be highly ſuitable to the nature and diſpoſition of the Goſpel, which they were deſign'd to illuſtrate, which Goſpel is commonly expreſt in the Language of the Holy

Evangeliſts by the Kingdom of Heaven, and is ſometimes call'd the Goſpel of the Kingdom.

This Goſpel conſiſts of Doctrines or Myſteries of Belief, and of Precepts of Chriſtian Manners or Behaviour.

The Noble Sublimity of the one, and the moſt perfect Purity of the other, are worthy in all reſpects of the profound wiſdom of the Sacred Trinity, which deſign'd them for the laſt and cleareſt revelation of the Will of God to Mankind.

Here are laid before our eyes the Doctrines of Man's Original Corruption, of his being for ever liable to the wrath of God and the juſtice of eternal puniſhment; of the neceſſity of Chriſt the Mediator in the Perſonal Union of his Divine and Humane Natures, for the carrying on the great work of our Redemption to its laſt perfection; of the ſatisfaction made for Sinners by his Death, of his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into Heaven, the moſt invincible Arguments to aſſert the truth of his Goſpel beyond contradiction, and to prepare the way for the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, that is, for the Spiritual Vicegerency and inviſible Government of the Church by the Third Perſon of the Sacred Trinity. Here we are aſſur'd of our Saviour's continual Interceſſion for us at the right hand of God, by the

merito-

meritorious repreſentation of that pure and unblemiſh'd Sacrifice of himſelf offer'd up once to God for us in virtue of the Eternal Decree, by which he was the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the World, the higheſt, the moſt conſummate and durable act of his Royal Prieſthood. Here we may take a view of the Glorious Privileges of our Chriſtian Faith, the weakneſs of human reaſon, the impotence of our affections, our miſerable proclivity to wickedneſs, our natural averſion to the pure love of God, and conſequent upon this the great and inevitable neceſſity of the conſtant Influences and Graces of the Spirit to illuminate our Underſtandings, to controul our Paſſions, to enable us to mortifie the ſtrongeſt habits of ſin, and finally to make us partakers of the Divine Life and Nature. Here are repreſented to our minds the exceeding great and precious Promiſes of Eternal Felicity and Glory, the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God from Heaven upon every Soul that does evil, thoſe terrors of the Lord which as St. *Paul* aſſures us are of exceeding efficacy to perſwade Men to forſake their Sins, which ſhall moſt infallibly be pardon'd and blotted out upon their habitual and perſevering repentance.

Laſtly, here we have a clear and full account of the Immortality of the Soul, the Reſurrecti-

on of the Body, the Laſt Judgment, and the concluſion of this viſible ſtate of things by the great and dreadful Conflagration.

Theſe are ſome of the principal and moſt concerning Truths of the Goſpel, which is the Kingdom of God and of our Saviour; the Kingdom which comes without exterior pomp and obſervation, the Kingdom which is within us as our Saviour tells us, the whole management of it being chiefly tranſacted after a ſpiritual and *inviſible* manner. The Myſteries of this Heavenly Policy, the Laws of the Evangelical Life, and the Sanction of theſe Laws by Rewards and Puniſhments preſent and future are largely ſet forth and explain'd in the Goſpel; but in theſe Parables of our Saviour recited by St. *Matthew*, we do not find the nature and conſtitution of Chriſt's Kingdom conſider'd in it ſelf, but ſomething which chiefly concerns the manner of its propagation and reception in the World. In the Parable of the Sower we find ſome careleſs and ſuperficial Hearers of the Word, ſome that liſten to the firſt promulgation of the Goſpel with joy, but fall off in times of Perſecution, and others who by receiving the Word of God in an honeſt and good heart, produc'd ſome thirty, ſome fifty, and ſome an hundred fold. In the Parable of the prodigious and ſpeedy encreaſe of the Tree of Muſtard, which from a ſingle Grain being the leaſt of all ſeeds was able

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in a little ſpace of time to overſhadow the Earth with its Branches, is plainly deſcrib'd the ſwift and wonderful propagation of the Goſpel, from the moſt feeble and unlikely beginnings in all human appearance, in ſpite of all manner of oppoſition both of Human and Diabolical force and policy.

The Parable of the Leaven tho' ſmall in quantity, which being put in three meaſures of Meal diffus'd its fermenting quality through the whole maſs, moſt perſpicuouſly exhibits to us the mighty power and efficacy of the Goſpel in the Preaching of the Apoſtles, who altho' but Twelve in number Converted the whole World to the Faith of Chriſt. And to mention but one ſingle Parable more out of ſo great a multitude, and that which immediately preceding my Text comprehends the ſame intire ſcope and deſignation of it; namely, the Parable of the Perſon who having found a Treaſure hidden in a Field, ſold all he had to purchaſe that Treaſure, which Emphatically deſcribes in the laſt and ſublimeſt meaning of the words the profound Myſteries of the Goſpel kept ſecret by God from the beginning of the World, but now reveal'd unto us from Heaven by the Son of God, even the riches of his Grace, the hope which is laid up in Heaven for us, the Treaſure incorruptible in a Kingdom

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